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S E C R E T ALGIERS 002058

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [ETTC](#) [KOMC](#) [MASS](#) [AG](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR RAISES BLUE LANTERN IMPASSE WITH MFA
SECRETARY GENERAL

SIPDIS

REF: STATE 160827 (NOTAL)

Classified By: Ambassador Richard W. Erdman,
for reasons 1.4 (b) (d)

1. (S) In an October 4 meeting with MFA Secretary General Lamamra on other issues, Ambassador pushed hard on the Blue Lantern impasse, frankly cautioning that this issue was damaging perceptions of Algeria in Washington and jeopardizing possibilities for increased military cooperation. Ambassador explained that the State Department's Blue Lantern program was established to protect sensitive technologies from being transferred to unauthorized parties. Protecting these technologies was important not only to the United States but to our friends. For some time, both the MFA and the Algerian Ministry of Defense had cooperated fully with our requirements.

2. (S) About a year ago, Ambassador continued, we asked the GOA to verify the receipt of equipment (containing sensitive U.S. technologies) sold by a South African firm. We requested confirmation from Algeria because we had come to have doubts about the reliability of the South African firm and knew we could trust Algeria. Despite our having raised this issue on numerous occasions with MFA and MOD officials, the GOA has not provided a response. Ambassador said we were perplexed by this and felt there must be a misunderstanding in view of Algeria's previous cooperation with the Blue Lantern program.

3. (S) The Ambassador explained to Lamamra that the State Department had a legal requirement to protect commercial sales of sensitive U.S. technologies via the Blue Lantern program. In the absence of Algerian cooperation, we had been forced to suspend license approval for sensitive exports to Algeria. To date, over a billion dollars of actual or potential sales were being held up. This was good for neither Algeria nor the United States. Ambassador said that on the tactical level, he was sure we would get through this largely technical problem sooner or later. The more strategic concern, however, was that Algerian non-cooperation with this program was creating negative perceptions of Algeria.

4. (S) Ambassador noted this was happening at a time when Algeria was interested in taking our military cooperation and military sales relationship to the next higher level and when he and others were urging closer cooperation. Algeria's non-cooperation was undercutting these efforts and meant that Algeria would have to work three times as hard to erase the negative perceptions it was creating. Our inability to process requests because of continued non-cooperation with Blue Lantern would also have ramifications for Algeria's ability to upgrade its C-130 fleet, upgrades that were necessary in order for Algerian C-130s to meet European avionics standards and continue to be able to fly in Europe. Only the U.S. was able to supply the required technology. Such a technology transfer was inconceivable as long as Blue Lantern issues remained unresolved. It was in both our interests to avoid such a problem.

5. (S) Given the increasing seriousness of this issue, Ambassador said he was also personally disturbed that in response to his request to meet with Minister-Delegate of Defense Guenaizia to discuss this issue, the MOD had replied with a note to our defense attache indicating the issue was being handled by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ambassador said it was quite possible that the request for a meeting could be bottled up at the same level in the MOD where we believe the Blue Lantern problem originated. In this regard, he noted that he had earlier raised his concerns with (outgoing) presidential Chief of Staff Belkheir and that the latter had subsequently called to say he had spoken to Guenaizia and that the Minister-Delegate would be happy to see the Ambassador. Ambassador said he would be returning to Washington for consultations for several days in the first part of October and, on his return, would seek a meeting with Guenaizia in order to discuss our military cooperation in light of his consultations. Lamamra responded that "God willing" Ambassador would have his meeting.

ERDMAN